

Preparing for an Era of Deepfakes and AI-Generated Ads: A Framework for Understanding Responses to Manipulated Advertising

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Abstract

Abstract Traditionally, the production and distribution of advertising material has relied on human effort and analog tools. However, technological innovations have given the advertising industry digital and automatic tools that enable advertisers to automate many advertising processes and produce “synthetic ads,” or ads comprising content based on the artificial and automatic production and modification of data. The emerging practice of synthetic advertising, to date the most sophisticated form of ad manipulation, relies on various artificial intelligence (AI) techniques, such as deepfakes and generative adversarial networks (GANs), to automatically create content that depicts an unreal, albeit convincing, artificial version of reality. In this article, a general framework is constructed to better understand how consumers respond to all forms of ad manipulation. It is anticipated that this article will help explain how consumers respond to the more sophisticated forms of synthetic ads—such as deepfakes—that are emerging at an accelerating rate. To guide research in this area, a research agenda is developed focusing on three manipulated advertising areas: ad falsity, consumer response, and originality. Furthermore, the implications for theory and industry are considered.